



Dobbantó – women entrepreneurs' competence development

Hungary

2004-2014

Summary

The *Dobbantó – Women entrepreneurs' competence development* programme is an intensive course for women intending to start a business or already running one. It was launched in 2004 and uses a combination of methods – training, advice, peer support and networking – to help women start their own businesses. It lasts for 90 hours spread over six weeks, and is accredited.

Groups of 20 participants learn basic management, planning, accounting and IT skills, how to make presentations, and how to bid for tenders. They write a one-page outline business plan, which they present to the group. They also benefit from peer support and networking, an online support system and club events.

.The programme is managed by Foundation for Small Enterprise Economic Development (SEED) and is financed by the Budapest Bank and participants' contributions.

Over the past nine years the programme has helped some 470 women entrepreneurs to launch or renew their businesses, thus creating at least 200 new enterprises.

Developing entrepreneurial potential

The *Dobbantó* (Springboard) women entrepreneurs' competence development programme (*Vállalkozónői Kompetenciafejlesztési Program*) was launched in Hungary in 2004 to increase entrepreneurial potential and develop key competences such as business planning, presentation, IT and networking skills through a



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combination of training, advice and mentoring. Participants in the programme are women who plan to or currently run a business. Between 2004 and 2011, some 470 women, organised into 23 groups, graduated from the programme, and around 200 new businesses have been launched or reshaped as a result.

The programme is managed by the Foundation for Small Enterprise Economic Development (SEED), which aims to promote gender equality by promoting effective, ethical and conscious business attitudes. Founded in 1990 by entrepreneurial representative groups, higher education institutions, financial institutions and ministries, SEED started by trying to broaden the knowledge base of entrepreneurs and to develop a sound entrepreneurial culture and environment in Hungary. Working with enterprises, NGOs and civil society organisations, SEED was granted public status in 1998 and in 2003 became an accredited adult education centre.

Intensive business training for women

The Dobbantó programme is an accredited intensive training programme (90 hours in 12 days) for groups of 20 participants. It includes the main elements of business start-up and how to run a business but also has modules on self-consciousness and communication skills. The programme



includes both sector-specific and transversal skills, combines a number of learning activities (training, advice, peer support, networking), and is based on a well-developed training strategy that has been and improved over the years. At the end participants have to present their own outline business plan.

The programme also builds on peer support within the participant groups. The programme contains a closed online knowledge-sharing facility (Confluence, used in 100 countries by more than 13,500 organisations), personal mentoring and a club system to create opportunities for networking.

Over the past nine years the programme has helped some 470 female entrepreneurs to launch or renew their business, thus creating or reshaping at least 200 new enterprises. It has also affected many others. On average 2,000 people have been regularly informed of the programme. SEED's web page had 38,000 visitors in 2012, and its Facebook page has 800 followers. Five hundred people have learnt about the programme through two female entrepreneur networks maintained by SEED and its partners (the Hungarian Network of Female Entrepreneur Ambassadors and the Hungarian Network of Mentors of Female Entrepreneurs). The results have been used by the institutions promoting enterprise to improve the support they offer.

To provide a firm scientific foundation for the project, it was preceded by a large-scale survey of 1,000 Hungarian female entrepreneurs, financed by the Equal Opportunities Department of the former Ministry of Social Affairs. The survey described the characteristic features of female entrepreneurs and the factors promoting and hindering their activities, and suggested that the low level of female entrepreneurial activity is attributable to low self-esteem and lack of necessary competencies.

The programme is financed by Budapest Bank's Corporate citizenship programme and by contributions from participants. In the new EU programming period (2014-2020), partly due to the cooperation of SEED with the Ministry of National Economy and on the success of the Dobbantó programme, women entrepreneurs will be a specific target group in the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme and could also be financed through the EU's Structural Funds. Thus the project achieved a wide impact and will indirectly contribute to long-term effects that originally were not even intended.

Continuous improvement and transfer

Dobbantó has also helped to plan new measures for female entrepreneurs in the forthcoming EU programming period. The programme has been developed continuously using the experience it has gained, and has already been transferred. In 2012-13 the same training technique was provided within the "Come back" programme, which targeted mothers returning to the labour market from childcare leave (funded by the ESF Social Renewal OP). An additional element, mentoring, was included at this stage.

To influence public opinion more broadly, it gave its active support to Hungary's first TEDxWomen conference. More than 100 people came to the event, and more than 2,000 downloaded the presentations of female entrepreneurs from the internet.

The programme's success factors are mainly related to the fact that SEED Foundation is a big, non-profit public utility organisation with a stable background and staffing.

The experience of the Dobbantó programme shows that only the systematic, continuous development of a programme can be successful, because original good ideas can be steadily improved over the years. However, to build up such a specific programme for such a specific target group demands long-term commitment and financing. Finance was one of the main obstacles the programme faced. Indeed, its financing is quite unstable, despite SEED's attempts to build a diverse funding base. The crisis since 2008 has also had a negative financial effect because



Hungary's banks, IT and communications companies have been heavily taxed since then, which has significantly reduced their corporate social responsibility contributions.

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Website: <http://www.seed.hu/en>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7reyN4LMKjU>

A short speech on SEED Foundation by the representative of the Hungarian Government in 2011 in the EU Women Congress in New York: http://youtu.be/tOJxTu_6X1o

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